



# JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

*James L. Clifford, Editor — William L. Payne, Ass't. Editor*

*610 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University,*

*New York 27, N. Y.*

Vol. VIII, No. 4

Oct., 1948

## Johnson Birthday Celebrations

On Saturday, the 18th of Sept. — in Lichfield, England, and in New Haven, Conn. — were held two large gatherings to celebrate the birth of the Great Cham of Literature. In Lichfield there was the usual supper at the Guildhall, with the Mayor in the chair, and addresses by the new President and by Professor Thomas Bodkin. There were the customary toasts to the Royal Family, the Mayor, Johnson's old school, "The Immortal Memory of Dr. Samuel Johnson," and to "The Visitors," responded to this year by George McCue (Colorado College) and his wife, Lillian de la Torre. During the evening a message from American Johnsonians (drafted by Fritz Liebert) was loudly applauded by the more than a hundred people in attendance. Happily we have had a personal report on the affair from the enthusiastic Buenos Aires Johnsonians, A.S. Hall-Johnson and his wife, who stopped off in New York on their way back to the Argentine.

The gathering in New Haven was made possible by the enterprise and overwhelming hospitality of Fritz Liebert of the Yale Library. It was an occasion long to be remembered. In the afternoon there was the opening of a special exhibition in the library of rare works by Johnson (where in the world could a similar exhibit be so readily assembled?), followed later in the evening by a splendid dinner at Liebert's home. For the occasion the host had prepared one of the hardest Johnson quizzes your editor has ever struck (we hope to let you all struggle with it in an early issue of the JNL), and a privately printed little brochure carrying the full title: *Johnson's Last Literary Project: an Account of the Work which He Contemplated on His Death-bed But Did not Survive to Execute; Now Newly Related by H. Liebert on the Occasion of a Dinner Given for a Company of Ladies and Gentlemen to Mark the*

*Anniversary of Dr. Johnson's Birthday.* The project referred to, we might add, was the proposed writing of the life of John Scott, the Quaker poet of Amwell.

The high point of the day came after dinner, with a series of short talks by Liebert, Donald Hyde (who told of his recent peregrinations in Johnsonian England), Chauncey Tinker, Ralph Isham (who told of the arrival of the Fettercairn papers), Joseph Wood Krutch, and W. S. Lewis. Rarely has your editor heard so much wit, erudition and good sense packed into one evening's program. The 1948 celebration will probably live in the recollections of those privileged to attend as a high point in literary after-dinner speaking.

Far off in the Happy Isles Johnson must certainly have nodded with approval, even though his hitherto unknown admonition to Boswell (reported on the sole authority of Joseph Wood Krutch) was not rigorously followed. "Conversation," Krutch reported Johnson as observing, "is the delight of every rational being, but no man likes to be talked at."

BOSWELL: "But, sir, it is an ancient custom. What shall a man do when he is called upon?"

JOHNSON: "Why, sir, if he is asked to make a speech, then let him make a speech. But let him not feign reluctance and then indulge a prolixity incompatible with his protestations. Evils which cannot be avoided may be attenuated or curtailed. No man except the speaker ever wished a speech longer than it was. And if several are to talk, let them all talk at once. It will make more noise that way and it will be sooner over."

Excellent advice, say we, except for Johnsonian celebrations!

## Fettercairn Boswell Papers

Another historic occasion occurred Saturday evening, Oct. 23, in the New York apartment of Col. Ralph Isham, with the formal opening of the boxes containing the great collection of Boswell manuscripts found in Fettercairn House, Scotland, in 1930-1931. For twelve years known to American scholars only through the catalogue issued by C. C. Abbott, the papers have finally been re-united with the other material discovered at Malahide Castle. Now at last the greater part of Boswell's huge collection (still many of Johnson's letters to Boswell have not been found) is in one place.

Some idea of the excitement of the evening may be had when it is remembered that in the boxes was the original full journal of



Boswell's visit to London in 1762-63, the year of his first meeting with Johnson. As Isham dramatically read passage after passage from the journal, many of them hitherto completely unknown, it was difficult to refrain from literally and figuratively "taking off the roof." And this intimate journal is only one of hundreds of important letters and documents which will someday (we hope soon) provide fascinating new pictures of life in the Johnson circle. Indeed, the mere thought of what still remains to be read for the first time by most of us is overwhelming.

Prepared especially for this occasion was a handsome thin booklet containing a facsimile of one of the jewels of the Isham collection -- a letter to Boswell from his son Alexander, a boy of fourteen, about the approaching *Life of Johnson*. L. H. Butterfield provided an explanatory note, and P. J. Conkwright was responsible for the typography. We probably will not be far wrong in predicting that it will someday be a much desired collector's item.

### Adam Collection Sold

For the past twelve years the famous Adam collection of Johnsoniana, described in detail in the mammoth 4 vol. catalogue well-known to all of you, has been on loan at the Univ. of Rochester. Within recent weeks it has been sold by the Adam heirs to Donald and Mary Hyde of Four Oaks Farm, Somerville, N.J. Already having one of the finest collections of books and manuscripts concerned with Johnson and Mrs. Thrale (it will be remembered that they also own Dr. Johnson's tea pot), the Hydes now will be the possessors of a stupendous assortment of books and manuscripts, perhaps the most voluminous assembly of material about one social group in private hands anywhere in the world. How happy it is that the material will be housed in the home of such a generous couple who are intensely interested in all scholarly projects!

### Lord Harmsworth

We are distressed to have to announce the death on August 12 of Lord Harmsworth, at the age of 78. To him Johnsonians everywhere owe a great debt of gratitude, for it was through his personal generosity that the Johnson House at 17 Gough Square was presented to the British nation. And it has been through his unflagging interest and aid that the House has become an important museum of relics of the Johnson circle.

From Mrs. Phyllis Rowell, custodian of the House, has come the following tribute, which expresses better than we can the sorrow of all who knew him. "I shall miss him very much; he had been a friend for over 30 years to my family and myself, and we have built up Johnson's House together. H was the kindest, most thoughtful, and most gracious man one could wish to know . . . a fitting person to follow in the footsteps of Sam. Johnson, so like him in many ways. A great and understanding heart, a ready wit, a great gentleman because of his simplicity of heart and mind, yet a mind brilliant to the end, a deep and helpful sympathy for all in trouble or distress! I can truly say of him as Reynolds did of Johnson: In all the years I knew him, I never knew him strut nor go on tip-toe; he only never stooped."

### The Johnson Society of London

The program for meetings of the Johnson Society of London has just reached us -- meetings held usually on the third Saturday of each month at No. 169 Strand, W.C. The speakers and topics are: 18 Oct., J. E. Hodgson, "Some Experiences in Johnsonian Bibliography"; 20 Nov., W. H. Graham, "The Expedition of Humphry Clinker"; 18 Dec., F. W. M. Draper, "Topham Beauclerk"; 15 Jan., 1949, Richard Capell, "The Great Dr. Burney"; 13 Feb., Rev. Canon Adam Fox, "Dr. Johnson's Criticism of Thomas Gray"; 19 March, Margaret Barton, "Johnson and Garrick"; 23 April, J. P. Collins, "Dr. Johnson as a Standard of Character"; 21 May, T. D. Fitzgerald, "Dr. Johnson and the Dictionary."

We welcome also the latest issue of *The New Rambler* (No. 13), which contains a number of interesting essays, as well as flattering remarks about some American publications. We lament that the paper shortage in England still forces a severe limitation on the number of copies that can be run off each time of this little mimeographed periodical. Consequently, American subscribers cannot yet be accepted in large numbers.

### Thomsoniana

In our July issue we asked if any of our readers could supply further details connected with Geoffrey Tillotson's bibliographical note concerning the authorship of a poem in praise of the Irish poet James Delacour entitled "A Prospect of Poetry." Douglas Grant (University of Edinburgh) points out that in Morel's



Thomson, *Sa Vie et Ses Oeuvres*, the ascription of the poem to Thomson is denied, the denial being based on an item in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1736 (VI, 484) wherein Cave declared that Thomson "knew nothing of the piece." Grant suggests that as Cave was a personal friend of Thomson the disclaimer might well be regarded as having been endorsed by Thomson himself. He adds, "the poem reads like a pastiche of Thomson's style. His eccentricities are imitated well enough, but not his centricities." Can anyone bring further light to bear on the authorship of this poem?

Douglas Grant has himself just completed a new biography of Thomson, which is to be published in London by the Cresset Press, probably next spring. The work is based on new research into contemporary sources, particularly the newspapers, and it will include a considerable number of unpublished letters and poems addressed to Miss Elizabeth Young, the Poet's *Amanda*. It is to be primarily an account of the poet's career and a study of his personality, but a chapter has been devoted to an examination of the reception given to his work by his contemporaries. If any of our readers knows of Thomson material in the United States, Grant would be very grateful for information about it. His address is 3 Dalrymple Crescent, Edinburgh 9, Scotland.

R. W. Chapman writes: "Thomsonians will like to know that an annual open-air service is (or was, before the war) held at the ruins of the old church of Southdean (pronounced Sood'n), Thomson's parish, to commemorate the battle of Otterbourne. Southdean was the rendezvous of the Scots before the battle. On one occasion the Minister secured the attendance of both the Douglas and the Percy. I have myself heard eloquent addresses by Sir Walter Elliott and Sheriff John Jamieson."

Jim Osborn points out in a recent catalogue of Pickering and Chatto, London, a copy is listed of the 1744 edition of *The Seasons*, having interesting associations. It was given to Richard Clarke by Thomson, "who sent it him by Stephen Duck the Poet."

Of interest also is the anonymous essay on Thomson "Nature's Volume Broad-displayed" in *TLS* for 28 August.

## Eighteenth Century Bibliographical Pamphlets

Mention should be made of a new series of check-lists of critical studies concerned with 18th century writers, the work of Francesco Cordasco of Long Island University. The earliest is-

sues, devoted to Smollett and Richardson, were produced by the lithoprint process by Edwards Bros; the last to appear, *Laurence Sterne: a List of Critical Studies Published from 1896 to 1946*, has been printed by the Long Island Univ. Press (price \$1.00). All four may be secured from this press in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Cordasco has written also of his future plans. The next issue, devoted to Fielding (1686-1743) is at press and will be available in a few weeks. Eventually the series is planned to include at least twenty numbers having to do with Goldsmith, Hume and Gibbon, Thomas Gray, William Godwin, Horace Walpole, etc. Another issue — *Samuel Johnson: a Bibliographical Record of Critical, Biographical, and Textual Studies, 1800-1946* -- is about two-thirds completed.

### Montague Summers

We have from Gellert S. Alleman (Rutgers at Newark) the following comments:

"In print, if not in conversation, scholars tended to ignore Montague Summers, a literary antiquarian who died August 10 at Richmond, Surrey. As a result, students of Restoration drama, Gothic romance, and witchcraft must use or neglect his work at their peril. For Summers wrote much on varied topics and, though he was anticipated more frequently than he admitted, often was first with the facts.

"His play revivals at the Phoenix Society and his editions of Behn, Congreve, Wycherley, Otway, Shadwell, and Dryden stimulated interest in Restoration drama. Paradoxically, they also did something to retard academic study of it. His proprietary feeling toward the period made him attack savagely almost every Restoration scholar. These attacks, combined with Summers' carefully contrived eccentricities of personality, style, taste -- no one since Genest has admired so many third-class dramatists -- his vehement political and religious adherence to lost causes have kept scholars from evaluating his work in print. Although his texts of Otway and Dryden have been assailed, most of his editions, *The Restoration Theatre*, and *The Playhouse of Pepys* are yet to be assayed in philological journals.

"The fact is unfortunate, since Summers' editions, though expensive collectors' items with exasperating prefaces and notes, appear to have discouraged critical texts. Only Otway has been edited



since, and no major Restoration dramatist has received definitive treatment such as W. S. Clark gave the Earl of Orrery. Despite Summers' critical limitations, his political, religious, and academic grudges, his excursions into Restoration arcana, his two volumes of theatrical history contain much that is not readily available elsewhere. Since the scholars whom Summers assailed refused to review him, one must repeat a trite *caveat lector*."

### Miscellaneous News Items

Sarah L. C. Clapp (N. W. St. College, La.) calls our attention to a new periodical, *History and Bibliography*, which is published at Christchurch, New Zealand. It aims to "provide a journal for historians (both university and amateur), for bibliophiles, for bibliographers, for book collectors, and for antiquarians." Modelled on *Notes and Queries*, it will welcome items from scholars everywhere, though its chief concern will naturally be with New Zealand matters. There is an offer to pay for articles relating to history and biography. Communications should be addressed to the Editor, 99 Hereford St., Christchurch, New Zealand.

E. N. Hooker (U.C.L.A.) writes that a limited number of copies of the latest *ARS* facsimile of Edward Moore's *The Gamester* are available to libraries at 75¢, and to members who wish to use the play in class. Group orders will be taken at 60¢ per copy. The number of copies available is quite limited, and the cost of a second printing is so great that it probably will never be run off again. So get in your order at once if you wish to take advantage of this opportunity.

Clarence L. Kulisheck, now Head of the English Dept. at Baker Univ., Baldwin, Kansas, writes that he is currently trying to track down the phrase "lowlands of Parnassus" which he thinks was first used by Swift or by one of his contemporaries. He is also looking for echoes of Hudibrastic and other Butlerian lines in Swift's verse. Any suggestions or hints will be very welcome.

On October 15 the *Journal of the History of Ideas* gave a supper party in honor of the 75th birthday of Arthur O. Lovejoy. Marjorie Nicolson acted as Mistress of Ceremonies, and there were talks by George Boas, W. P. Montagu, Irwin Edman, Basil Willey, and Lovejoy himself. A special "preprint" of five articles in his honor was distributed to all those present. Thus was special recognition given to the work of a scholar who has largely modified our approach to 18th century basic ideas.

We were delighted to see in a review of F. C. Turner's new life of James II (*TLS*, 21 August) some highly complimentary remarks about E. S. de Beer, who has in the past sent many welcome comments to the *JNL*. The anonymous reviewer remarks: "Mr. de Beer is — may one say? — the uncrowned king of English seventeenth-century historical research."

Every lover of the 18th century will rejoice to learn that the Hoeing Fund at the University of Rochester library is being largely spent on Restoration and 18th century authors. First editions already assembled include Dryden's *Religio Laici*, *The Hind and the Panther*, *Aureng-Zebe*; Shadwell's *The Medal of John Bayes*, Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* and Rowe's *The Tragedy of Jane Shore*. Defoe items include his *Essay upon Projects*, *Hymn to the Pillory* and *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. Eight first editions of Pope's epistles have been bought, as well as many "first[s]" of Gay. All in all, a foundation for a really first-class collection has been laid, and every student will watch its continued growth with interest. We need more such funds! For an account of the collection see the article by R. F. Metzdorf in *The Univ. of Rochester Library Bulletin*, Autumn 1948.

After a long struggle trying to find some connection between Dr. Johnson and Thoreau, the subjects for successive biographies by J. W. Krutch, we finally hit upon the obvious answer. Both men liked cats. And so does Krutch.

### Recent Valuable General Studies

*Voyages to the Moon* (Macmillan), Marjorie Nicolson's new book, is the kind every scholar would like to write. Its subject matter opens up new vistas for the layman as well as for the serious student; its lively style stimulates all of us to try to emulate a naturalness far removed from what Dixon Wector calls "such common scholastic vices as obscurity, pretentiousness, and a morbid infatuation with the complex-compound sentence." Devoted chiefly to accounts written in the 17th and 18th centuries, it may well surprise many readers by the amazing extent of aeronautical adventures. To mention only a few of the authors discussed, there are such men as Rousseau, Johnson, Fielding, D'Urfey, Gray, Addison, John Wilkins, Richard Owen Cambridge, and, of course, Defoe and Swift. In self-defense, Marjorie Nicolson writes: "So rich is the literature of wings that I must deliberately pick and choose among the many writers of the eighteenth century." Almost forty pages



of bibliography, most of it of primary sources, bear out her declaration. Among the eleven illustrations from old prints, our favorite shows Cyrano de Bergerac moonward-bound by virtue of the sun's attraction for the flasks of dew which he had strapped about his middle.

Just received from England is a book which will undoubtedly prove extremely useful to all of us — James Sutherland's *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry* (Clarendon Press). Interestingly written without obvious bias or partisanship, this is a straightforward statement of what the 18th century poets were trying to do, what were their implied aesthetic theories and aims, and what was their basic accomplishment. Sutherland discusses the general background, the restraints and refinements of poetry in a polite society, the underlying attitude of the poets toward Nature and toward poetry as an art. This is the kind of a book for which many of us have been waiting — a judicious statement to which students may be sent for a clear explanation of the poetic frame of reference of the Age of Enlightenment.

In *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (Princeton Press), John Harold Wilson has considered a group of poets collectively in relation to their cultural milieu and, by careful sifting of unwarranted reputations shows that the private lives of the wits were less lurid, their public lives somewhat more useful, and their contributions to lyric, satire, the stage, and literary criticism more substantial than has been recognized. The result certainly justifies Wilson's belief that the wits "can be seen best as individuals if they are seen first as a cohesive group." Essential for students of the later 17th century, the book will be useful also for those interested in 18th century occasional verse; and since Wilson's style communicates something of the obvious pleasure with which he worked, it will also be welcomed by the general reader. One of Wilson's tasks has been the judicious amputation of unreliable anecdotage, a process well illustrated by his account of the growth of legend concerning Lady Shrewsbury. Yet since he tells in detail the stories he must refute, Wilson preserves the entertainment value of what he intends to supersede. His style is usually sprightly, and the chapter "Love Songs to Phyllis," for example, a convenient critical appraisal which certainly does not overpraise, gains something because it, too, is the work of a wit. Handsomely printed, with useful documentation and pleasant illustrations, this is a volume to be heartily welcomed.

There is little need to describe in detail such a well-known work as Joseph Wood Krutch's *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*. Long out of print, and difficult to find even in the second-hand book stores, it has now been re-issued by the Columbia Press. For the new issue there has been added a checklist of recent critical studies on the topic, prepared by G. S. Alleman, who has in progress a large comprehensive bibliography of Restoration scholarship.

### Concerned with Johnson

An important work of scholarship concerned with Dr. Johnson is W. K. Wimsatt's *Philosophic Words*, just published by the Yale Univ. Press. To be sure, Wimsatt's book is not for that proverbial general reader who delights in Johnson the eccentric character in Boswell's *Life*. Nor can it be recommended to the average student of literature interested in individual works of art or in broad aesthetic movements. Instead it is directed to the serious linguists, to those interested in the history of scientific ideas, and to scholars who wish to know more about such technical matters as the development of Johnson's style and his use of the so-called "hard words" in *The Rambler*, etc. For those who can appreciate his wide erudition and superb reasoning powers, Wimsatt's research will remain as a landmark of detailed linguistic study.

Wimsatt's book is an amplification of one of the most striking hypotheses of his earlier book on Johnson's style (1941), namely that what has been laughed at as Johnson's preference for heavy Latinized diction is essentially his preference for the precision and metaphoric power of the language of natural philosophy. Here Wimsatt has marshalled abundant evidence from his reading of *The Rambler* and of the quotations in the *Dictionary* that Johnson constantly adapted the scientific words of early science to literary uses. Even Wimsatt's word lists in his appendix provide material for many discussions, and show that Johnson's use of many long words was not mere Latinizing.

Elton Trueblood's edition of *Doctor Johnson's Prayers* has been reprinted in England by the Student Christian Movement Press.

C. A. Miller has expanded and printed his address to the Boswell Club of Chicago with the title *Anecdotes of the Literary Club*. It consists largely of short descriptions of the early members of the club.



Two interesting articles which have lately appeared are: Maurice Quinlan, "An Intermediary between Cowper and Johnson" [Benjamin Latrobe], in *RES* for April 1948; and Edward A. Bloom, "Samuel Johnson on Copyright," in *JEGP*, also for April 1948.

### Some Special Studies

Allen Hazen's *Bibliography of Horace Walpole*, recently published by the Yale Univ. Press, is a superb example of bibliographical learning combined with beautiful printing. It is, in a way, a supplement to the *Bibliography of the Strawberry Hill Press* which appeared in 1942; the earlier volume dealt with all the works printed at his private press, while the present work, dealing with Walpole's own writings, does not repeat the descriptions of his own books printed at Strawberry Hill. Based largely on the great collection of Walpoliana of W. S. Lewis, it provides further evidence of the astonishing number of Walpole's published works. Of Hazen's great skill as a research bibliographer everyone by this time should be aware. Indeed, if any reader of *JNL* is not already conversant with the finest traditions of modern descriptive bibliography, he may well use Hazen's two volumes as a perfect model to study and imitate.

Percy Scholes' two-volume life of Dr. Burney (O.U.P.) is the kind of delightful anecdotal book which is perfect for the bedside table. In this respect it closely resembles Boswell's *Life*. Packing his work with good stories, Scholes can never resist the temptation to digress if he finds an amusing episode to describe. As a result it is more than a leisurely life of the fashionable music teacher; it is a scrap-book of miscellaneous information about musicians, artists, literary men, and socialites of the 18th century. If it weren't for the terrifically high price, we would whole-heartedly advise all of you to add the volumes to your library.

Louis Kronenberger has written an informal, appreciative Introduction to the new Modern Library edition of the first part of *Robinson Crusoe* and of *A Journal of the Plague Year*. This 320-page inexpensive volume should be welcomed by teachers of undergraduate courses in the 18th century.

The *Index to Defoe's Review*, by Bill Payne, our Asst. Editor, has been published by the Columbia Press.

There have been two recent books about Sterne: L. V. Hammond's *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (Yale Press); and Ernest

Dilworth's *The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne* (King's Crown). Imitating the style of Sterne himself, Dilworth tries to prove that Sterne was always the jester, and that his work is throughout a superb mockery of the sentimental tradition. We wonder if you will be wholly convinced.

### Swift Studies

Of prime importance to all Swift scholars is the appearance of Vol. IX of the Shakespeare Head Swift edition of the prose works, edited by Herbert Davis. Included in this volume are various Irish tracts in the period 1720-23 and Swift's sermons. Following the practice of previous volumes there is also a special essay by a contributing expert — this time on the sermons by Louis A. Landa.

Some mention should be made of the new *Portable Swift*, with a pleasantly written interpretive Introduction by Carl Van Doren. Any complaint at this late date over the items selected is obviously futile, but we do wish the publishers had seen fit to make the book at least the size of the *Portable Johnson and Boswell*, so that more could have been included from Swift's major works. Whether by specific design or not, we can't be certain, all controversial religious works of Swift have been studiously ignored, with the result that there is practically nothing from *A Tale of a Tub*, etc. Yet who might have objected to his ironic Argument Concerning the Abolishing of Christianity? Moreover, the omission of any selection from Swift's bitter verses is to be regretted.

An interesting bibliographical article by H. Teerink, concerned with *Cadenus and Vanessa* may be found in the *Harvard Library Bulletin* for Spring 1948.

Two inexpensive editions of Gulliver may be mentioned: the Rinehart paper-covered edition, with an Introduction by John F. Ross; and the photo-lithoprint reproduction produced for the Great Books Foundation, which contains no commentary or scholarly apparatus.

### A Note

Because of the large number of important books discussed in this issue, our usual summary of articles, etc. must be held over until next time.